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AUTHOR Moy, Caryl T.; Hotvedt, Mary
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ABSTRACT

A unique approach to teaching human sexuality at the college level is to present the content and raise sociological and interpersonal value questions from different lifestyle viewpoints. Developing a course such as this has involved securing approval and encouragement from university administration who trust faculty judgment but who are under community pressure to eliminate "sick sex." The approach involves team teaching by two persons who publicly espouse divergent life values. To achieve a pluralistic approach the interpersonal relationship between the two instructors who have had little in common, except for the interest in teaching sexuality, had to evolve from one of tolerance, through risk, openness, acceptance, and finally to love. Beginning the teaching term by using a value positioning exercise the difference in values but the acceptance of the difference is modeled for the students. Throughout the course through the presentations the sociological content is viewed by one in alternate lifestyles as well as a person who lives the style that is traditionally established through legal and social supports. Student journal reflections provide the feedback on affective growth and learning; explicit media materials add an important dimension. (Author)

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TEACHING SEXUALITY FROM DIVERGENT LIFE-STYLE VIEWPOINTS

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By

Caryl T. Moy, A.C.S.W.

and

Mary Hotvedt, Ph.D.

Based on three years of teaching experience
at Sangamon State University, Springfield, Illinois.

Acknowledgements: Class members who gave written permission
for quoting from their journals.

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ABSTRACT

Two persons who openly espouse divergent life styles have successfully developed a university Human Sexuality course, emphasizing their divergence to strengthen the course. What is replicable and what is seen as idiosyncratic to their situation is delineated. The process of the change in their working relationship and the management of the different life styles including the techniques they have developed are discussed. Each is responsible for different content presentations and how students document their learning is shown.

Learning objectives of the course are on three levels: increased personal sexual awareness, increased sociological cognitive knowledge, and greater integration of knowledge and theory for professional use. By sharing the unique teaching experience, the authors provide a model for increasing sexual awareness for a broad spectrum of students.

TEACHING SEXUALITY FROM DIVERGENT LIFE-STYLE VIEWPOINTS

PURPOSES:

SOC 456: Perspectives on Human Sexuality; PSY 325: Human Sexual Behavior; SW 510: Social Work and Sexual Issues. Entries such as these in college catalogues indicate the prevalence of these courses now included in university curricula -- but at this stage, preparation for this college teaching in human sexuality is more often the result of individual faculty interest and initiative than it is the result of any specialized training. Thus, those of us who teach human sexuality in college have often developed many of our skills "on the job" through accident and good hindsight. We offer our experiences in the hope that they may be useful to other faculty members considering development of sexuality courses.

The purpose of this paper is to present the methods and processes by which we discovered a workable/working team-teaching style for our human sexuality course. Some of what we must cover is idiosyncratic -- the conflicts and meshing of our personalities within the specific context of our university. On this level the paper is for us a celebration of our friendship and partnership. It is also part of the analysis of the success of the course through its history. We will try, however, to sort out historical accident from replicable processes so that other instructors may incorporate our techniques and possibly our team teaching approach into their own work. In that event, our history may serve as a comparison for the conflicts and growth they experience.

UNIVERSITY AND THE COURSE STRUCTURE:

We teach at Sangamon State University, an environment that has several factors that should be presented. It is a new upper-level public affairs university where faculty are given a relatively wide range of freedom in curriculum development and class size is relatively small. We began teaching Human Sexuality in the Spring of 1972 with the community peering over our shoulders with more than casual interest, for the university was a new element in its midst and we were a new element in the university. (One hopeful legislator had already stated in his platform he would prevent "sick sex at Sangamon State".) While we were in agreement that the issues of homosexuality and gender identity were appropriate to the curriculum we knew others didn't. This was especially problematic in the films that we were using, many from Multi-Media Resources. We vividly remember the curiosity of non-class members which led to rumors that could be detrimental to the continuation of the class; but we also gratefully remember how the original class members were the best supporters of the total learning experience and almost with missionary zeal sought to dispel these.

Class size and structure has varied somewhat. The smallest class group was 22 people and the largest was 42. The common size is about 30, at the request of the University. We have the classification for entrance to the class designed as "With Permission of Instructor" so that we can control the number. The procedure also allows us to interview each interested student

and to suggest a student enroll at a later time should that person appear to be wanting the class for moralistic or heavy psychiatric reasons. This also produces a kind of personal investment in the class which makes support for its continuation easily felt.

We work on a grade contract with our students in which the main requirement is the keeping of a journal (Figure 1). In addition to this, we ask for active participation in discussion. We explain that only quiet attention in the group puts the more verbal students in more vulnerable positions. And we also encourage the more verbal students to be responsive to those less comfortable in idea sharing. Reading requirements are quite heavy. Students choose the kind and number of their journal entries to reflect readings, class experiences, film reactions, and outside contacts. They determine the kind and number of entries according to the grade they wish to receive. In our experience the journal has proved a good indicator of course understanding and competency as well as of personal growth. Students may also elect to take a pass/fail evaluation. The contract removes tension in the teacher/student relationship. We are not required to make a grade judgment or a statement about someone's sexuality, but we write a lengthy evaluation of our perceptions of total growth and learning at the end of the semester. This gives you the setting in which the two of us are teaching.

THE INSTRUCTORS:

Both of us as instructors of the course differ greatly in our academic training, politics, life styles and original

teaching agendas. Through both accident and conscious work at our relationship in and outside the classroom, we made the differences work for the class.

Mary, who got her Ph.D. in cultural anthropology at Indiana University including work at the Kinsey Institute acknowledges that her academic work is influenced by political views. She sees herself as a cultural Marxist and a feminist. The small class size and flexible curriculum at SSU have helped her to develop her interests beyond traditional anthropology. While her original readings in sexuality were research oriented -- the Kinsey reports, Masters and Johnson's books -- she is now most interested in theoretical works on sexuality, most particularly Whilhelm Reich's earlier books.

Her life style underwent a great deal of change in the first year of the teaching relationship. Her six-year marriage ended in divorce during that time. Now she lives communally with adults and children, and is in the process of single parent adoption. She does not see marriage as a likely future alternative; she prefers to live communally and to maintain some other sexually open relationships in addition to a primary one.

Caryl likes to think of herself in her third career. First she taught family living and high school home economics. Then after receiving an MSW at the University of Chicago she began her next career as a community college counselor and also taught sociology of the family. She became increasingly process oriented, becoming

more humanistic in her teaching and Rogerian in her style of counseling. As often happens to those of us teaching such courses, more of her counseling requests were dealing with marriage and sexual problems.

The teaching of this course began her third career, that of "the woman counselor" for University students and of a University faculty member whose advocacy of the process of marriage is well known. With her husband, a physician and medical school dean, she also teaches the Minnesota Couples Communication Program. She classifies her marriage as an open one using the O'Neil's definition but one that is sexually monogamous, for she sees this as the symbol of the commitment. Her family picture also includes two teenage sons.

A small example indicates the different styles of the instructors. Returning to Springfield on a flight from a professional meeting we sat together, each engrossed in our own needlework. Caryl was wearing her usual blue-toned Danish-looking clothing and was doing fine and intricate needlepoint on a tiny piece of canvas and clipping her stitches with a silver scissors hanging from a ribbon around her neck. Mary, in her perennial blue jeans and loose shirt, was crocheting plant hangers, using a size K hook and raw jute, and cutting her stitches with a camping knife. It was no wonder our self-images initially frightened each other; we could not have seemed more different.

We were told about each other by a student whom Caryl had taught at the community college level and Mary had taught as he had proceeded through Sangamon State. He felt sure that two women with such strong mutual interests in family planning would want to know about each other. But whether we were going to be able to work together was a big question.

OUR MANAGEMENT OF DIFFERENT LIFE STYLES:

The process by which we learned to trust each other and to become honest about our differences -- in a sense how we developed the ability to argue about our differences and express real anger at times and yet to come back together -- has been one of trial and error. Yet we try to replicate this process. Our reflection about the organic process by which we became friends and colleagues will help clarify how we move people within a class toward value clarification. Very early in the sessions we made the commitment to get together weekly to plan the class and to talk with each other. Honesty was one of our strongest values so that we shared our feelings about the class. We had many conversations in which we would attempt to be increasingly honest with each other about what occurred in our personal lives, and what was important to us. Nonetheless, both of us had the fear, that if we went over into the negative side and could no longer accept the other, it would be a frightening omen for the class, as well as for the friendship that we were beginning to develop through the experience

of sharing in all our students' lives. A sharing of reactions to the class process with the class resulted in the group's slowly opening to each other.

The hardest thing for us to understand was the difference between our concept of sex. Mary was aware of this difficulty which made it hard for her to establish trust in Caryl when she wanted to share the struggle within her marriage. But when she became aware that Caryl did not advocate continuing in a destructive marriage relationship, and could feel support from her for the decision to divorce and then the later decision to live communally, a ground source of trust and professional respect for each of us was created that allowed us both to confidently agree to disagree.

An issue we both knew we shared originally, is the fear that we would proselatize for our own kind of life style and thus end up in conflict. But early we discovered that the primary value to our teaching from divergent life styles was that we reached entirely different spectrums of students. In doing so, we overlapped a little bit, but we were able to open up many more students to us, to each other, and to themselves.

While we were polarized in the class on issues of alternate life styles versus both traditional and non-traditional marriage, we saw the class polarized on the issue of homosexuality. In turn, our need to act as mediators during those difficult periods strengthened the relationship that we were developing. In a sense

we were helping students get into controversy by allowing them to witness the controversy between us and to model their styles of argument on ours. The management of situations of conflict was further facilitated through the kinds of communication skills that we were teaching in the class.

Many students have since said that seeing two women with very different value systems and life styles work together gave them courage to listen and to try to understand. The more radical young student became aware that she/he could listen to the student who was an engineer from the state highway department -- and he to her. Some students have acknowledged that seeing how we dealt with differences gave them the permission -- almost an expectation -- to deal with their diversity and conflict. A woman, a librarian in her mid twenties, wrote:

> "Seeing how you two women, who are so different, relate, has given me the incentive to deal with my parents' values as they differ with my decision to remain single and live alone. Before I thought it best to ignore them."

SPECIFIC TECHNIQUES USED:

We both agreed we wanted factual learning to take place with affective learning. So we began by using some technique to facilitate that kind of experience in the class -- to get the class to a position where they could work together as a group in spite of our value differences. The first exercise we used is a value positioning technique which we call the "Human Likert Scale"

(Figure 2). We use it the first session of the class to get the students moving with each other and to become aware of where they are alike or different from fellow students. Side benefits are that students touch each other as they move around the room. They cannot come in, find chairs that suit them the best, and stick in them the whole semester.

We read the series of statements that represent the common ranges of opinions expressed by all types of people on various aspects of sexual behavior. Some of the statements include "I have to have a love relationship in order to have a sexual relationship;" "I would want my 14 year-old child to have access to information about birth control;" or "I think homosexuals should be allowed to marry;" "I see the necessity to keep homosexuals out of some government work". When we read a statement we ask the students to get up and arrange themselves across the room on an imaginary axis representing a range of opinions from "Strongly Disagree" through "Strongly Agree" with "Neutral or Undecided" holding the center of the room. We insist that they get in a linear order, allowing for a certain amount of jostling for position and conversation among them. At various points on certain issues we each move into the line to show how much we differ on particular issues.

We repeat this exercise in the last session of the class to give people some sense of where they and others have changed

the profile of the class on major issues. It also leads to awareness of how they have wrestled with their values throughout the class, perhaps to emerge with an even firmer hold on the values with which they entered.

Another common technique we use is small group process. Early we devise groups having a wide variety of kinds of students - male, female, age range, life style range, and then build group trust as one would with any small group. We alternate facilitating those groups. We have at times used the idea of remaining with one group for the entire semester but the students have expressed their desire to have exposure to both of us.

Another topic -- and technique -- that we have used to develop a sense of trust and caring within the class is sensuality. Before we get to explicitly sexual topics we try to awaken the students' awareness of all their senses, of how they have enjoyed them in the past, of how those senses have matured over time. We introduce sensuality in a show-and-tell session, where everyone in the class brings objects or a willingness to share an experience or some talent in which they express their enjoyment in life, in Maslow's terms, a "peak experience". We each bring in four or five things of our own liking and <u>again</u> at this point share how we differ in our own sensuality. We go around the room, each person sharing experiences with the class. We've had everything -- pets, pictures of children, favorite paintings, and poetry. People eat yoghurt with a silver spoon or knead bread dough and pass it

around for everyone to poke. One woman hugged each person while wearing her flannel pajamas. As different kinds of experiences are shared, there is a snowballing effect, and everyone appreciates the other sensual experiences.

In that same session we follow up with a series of non-threatening touching exercises to develop trust in the class. Later we process feelings raised by the exercises. Some people are very excited, and others that become aware they have had a hard time dealing with some aspect of them. The class session closes with one of our favorite sensuous experiences. We serve special hot fudge sundaes -- rich vanilla ice cream, creamy and warm fudge sauce, and all the trimmings of whipped cream, cherries, and the toasted cashews. This whole session is a good bridging experience of the differences between us and among class members, making us realize the validity of differing life styles through sharing these common sensualities. This has always galvanized the class, and at that point we are able to go on to controversial contents.

DIFFERENT CONTENT PRESENTATIONS:

Throughout the course the various topics involved in sexuality are viewed through the perspective of the two life styles. The issue of commitment or involvement in a sexual relationship highlights the difference between us. Caryl presents the many kinds of monogamous marriage relationships and their characteristics. Carl Rogers' Becoming Partners focuses on the

process of entering enduring committed relationships and the Minnesota Couples Communication styles, which Caryl demonstrates, introduce means of working out problems within their commitment. We role play some of these styles for students to show their usefulness in enriching relationships. These styles then serve as models for communication between class members for the rest of the term, and allow open, non-threatening discussion of divergent life styles and issues.

Mary presents material about group marriage, sexually open marriage, non-monogamous relationships in general, swinging, and communal living. We have become more comfortable, each of us advocating those life styles we represent, talking about our styles of relationships in highly positive terms. Then we are also able to use the communication model to get students to talk about their own reactions to those issues. We move from the lecture presented by each of us on styles of relationships, into role-playing situations based on those styles. These role-playing situations include both those based on sexually-closed monogamous marriages, and those dealing with non-traditional elements of freedom between sexes. In the role-playing situations we also deal with the problem of sexually opening up what has been heretofore a monogamous relationship, and with situations which have arisen in group marriages and communal settings. The class members in both small and large groups discuss the dynamics of the interactions they observed.

In teaching bi-sexuality we developed a tool we call our "Together" diagram (Figure 3). We had been trying to find a way to help students differentiate between affective, genital, and fantasy behavior so that they could begin to see their own variations in behavior in the different times and situations of their lives. We tried to provide a grid, along the 0-6 Kinsey Scale, whereby they could make a decision and think through for themselves, for example, their own gender identity, or how they see themselves most of the time.

The diagram has the effect of helping heterosexual people who have been uncomfortable with the topic of homosexuality. They become aware of a way in which they can better understand aspects of their affective behavior with same sex friends as behavior they share with gay people. They are able to do this without feeling as threatened as they had been when they had started the course.

Within students' attitudes, we have found that both men and women, as they develop group technique skills, will make it increasingly difficult for students who have non-accepting attitudes to express them in an accusatory or repressive way. "I won't deal with that," or "Here's where I am," will be accepted and acknowledged but not, for example, "Being queer makes her an unfit mother."

The lectures we present in our areas of expertise are another example of divergence. From her anthropological background, Mary presents an overview of various cultures' sexual behaviors ranging from repressive to highly sexually expressive groups. From her interest in sexual theory she has developed a slide lecture on the history of pornography. Drawing from her experience in both agencies and public schools, Caryl presents issues in sex education. In her last lecture for the term Caryl discusses the different types of sexual counseling, i.e. the Masters and Johnson behavioral approach, Kaplan's use of psychodynamics, the Fithian-Hartman Model - the Barbach Approach, and Dobson's work with women's groups.

There is an issue in which we both are very uncompromising and present a united front: the right to sexual freedom. Whereas we have provided space in our class for very heated debates about sexual standards including such issues as abortion, pornography standards, and sex education, we have never taken an anti-gay or anti-feminist point of view. On these we have been fairly consistent and have taken some flack for refusing to consider reflective alternatives to these. An enrolled university administrator who was uncomfortable with the philosophy that understanding behavior didn't always mean approving behavior was very critical of Caryl for not sufficiently presenting the "status quo" which he represented. Sometimes we are questioned about bias because

we are both women. We try to be open to what men are wanting to say and are quick to ask, "How do you see that from yours or a male point of view?" Over half of the special speakers we invite to lecture are men.

As many educators experience, the interest in all the content objectives becomes so great that the semester seldom seems long enough. It begins with values introspection, sensuality, and general awareness of group process and communication openness. "Sex Roles" and "Heterosexuality in Traditional Models and Alternate Models" are followed by "Issues in Homosexuality." "Sexuality and the Law and the Arts" flows from the previous topics.

Contraception, adoption, abortion, right to life, are all issues considered when pregnancy is included as one of the facets of sexuality. "Sex education issues - where, when, who should educate" is followed by "sexual dysfunction and models of treatment."

Our aim is to increase a student's sexual awareness on three levels: a personal value level where each can feel more comfortable with their own sexuality; a sociological content level involving basic cognitive learning; and on a professional preparation level (a majority of the students' learning objectives include becoming human services professionals).

The Journal entries provide us with the satisfying evidence that these objectives have been met:

"I am that 'strong, independent woman' that I described at the first session -- only now I know myself so much better. And from here I continue to look inside and out. To share my self-acceptance with others when it will be helpful."

"I m getting more in touch with my own sexuality and my shifting, changing values are starting to hold some ground. By this I mean my values have been in a state of change and I haven't known what I really value and want. So I'm saying now, some things are more clear and I'm more aware of what I want."

"Our sexuality is really our entire being - not a separate, special part of our lives alone. Our sex life is really the total of our personality. And our sexuality comes into play with every human contact. Externalization - revealing ourselves to significant others - not just everyone.

The Clergy Consultation Service have probably been very valuable to many people. I had no idea of the help available to people in our community before

some of our excellent speakers. As a point I noticed -- the speakers who came across as themselves -- not as inflated/pretentious/or maybe even insecure -- were always accepted by our class."

Our doing this paper is a kind of celebration for us. We are using the paper to look back and evaluate how we really have developed a kind of team style that is not only carried into a classroom but even in community speaking engagements, workshops, and in consulting we've done together. We look forward to continuing to teach together. We hope to do a women's pre-orgasmic group outside the University this coming year. We think that our ability to work out this partnership has been reflected every semester in our students' growth. We would recommend for other faculty who are taking on the task of teaching human sexuality that they try for this kind of approach if they can find somebody they can work with and who are both willing to go through the group process together because of the very value in teaching so many kinds of people, and also for the amount of personal growth that is involved for yourselves. People on campus will say, that "If you two can get along, I guess anybody can".

FIGURE 1

JOURNAL CONTRACT

The following are the criteria for grading the journal for SOC 456, Search for Personal and Social Ethics in Human Sexuality.

A journal will be kept, consisting of general entries (including thoughts on class sessions), entries on readings, films, and outside contacts. Credit for the journal will be given for 15 general entries, 4 on reading, 2 on films, and 2 on contracts. Grades will be determined as follows:

	General	Readings	Films	Outside Contacts
A =	20	8	6	4
B =	18	6	4	3
C =	15	4	2	2

Journals falling below these requirements will be Incomplete. In addition to this, I understand my participation and attendance as judged by the instructors, will be considered in the grading process.

I agree to these standards of grading.

_____
Signature

_____
Date

Do you prefer grade or credit only?

FIGURE 2

SEXUALITY VALUE POSITIONING

Instructions: If you strongly disagree with the statement, go to the far left of the room. If you strongly agree, go to the right or place yourself in between where you feel you are along the continuum of agreement versus disagreement.

1. Only a married heterosexual couple should be allowed to adopt children.
2. I see some necessity for security reasons to keep homosexuals out of some governmental work.
3. A love relationship is necessary for me to have a sexual relationship.
4. One should not have intercourse unless they're married to the person.
5. I would want my 14 year-old to have access to birth control information and service.
6. I like living in the body I have.
7. My religion has provided me with a useful sexual ethic.
8. It is a woman's right to control the number and spacing of her pregnancies.
9. Homosexuals should be legally allowed to marry.
10. If my spouse were having an affair I would want to know about it.

11. If my spouse were having an affair with a member of the same sex I would want to know about it.
12. Children should be encouraged to use the words such as penis and vagina instead of "wee-wee" and "down there".
13. Sex education should be available in the 9th grade through the 12th grade.
14. I am able to express emotions and feelings as freely as I would like to.
15. It would be ok with me if my 18 year-old son brought his girl home from college to share his room for the summer.

FIGURE 3

GETTING MYSELF TOGETHER SCHEMA

0-6 Rating for Each Area

BEHAVIOR RATING

	Homosexual	Heterosexual
Affective Behavior		
Self-social Identity (I see myself behavior)		
Others' Social Identity (Others see my behavior)		
Fantasy Behavior		
Sexual Behavior		